5; Harrison D-4 (1912-1924) 1924 M1 Middle East
Bedouin M34

one is invited, and the half-starved Bedouin, who has perhaps not had a full meal for months, makes such use of his opportunities as seems incredible to a student of anatomy. Four hungry Bedouins are supposed to be able to eat a whole roasted sheep at one sitting, and I am sure that I have seen many such a Bedouin company that would be equal to the task. An Arab feast is an interesting sight. A whole sheep must be cooked for any honored guest, even if he has only one or two attendants. This animal, cooked as he frequently is in one piece, is placed on a huge copper platter and buried in a mountain of boiled rice. Out of the sides of this mountain, which would measure several bushels in bulk and which stands perhaps four feet high, are to be seen protruding the amputated stumps of the animal's four limbs. This enormous central dish is flanked by various side dishes containing gravies and a few vegetables. Vegetables, however, are few in number and scanty in amount. The proportion of cooking fat put on the rice is an index of the cordiality of the guest's welcome. There is quite certain to be several times the amount that a western palate enjoys. Around this mountain of food with its foothills of side dishes the guests seat themselves, all on the floor. The signal is given by the host's remarking, "In the name of God." There follows a mad race against time, for when one guest arises, all must follow his example. Obviously, then, the affair of the moment is to see that in the short time available as much as possible of God's blessings shall be appropriated. The meat is torn off in quarter-pound chunks. Such a piece is put into the mouth, bitten in two and swallowed, if indeed it is treated with so much ceremony. The rice is gathered up in great handfuls and poured down the esophagus, ap-

5: Harrison D-4 (1912-1924) 1924 M1 Middle East
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parently meeting with no great obstacle on the way. In five minutes everybody is filled to repletion. Pounds of meat have been consumed and bushels of rice. The side dishes are empty. Enormous wooden bowls of buttermilk are brought in and the meal washed down with great draughts of this favorite Arab drink. It is not remarkable that after a feast everybody expects to take a nap. So ends the festivity and the Bedouin settles down once again to his meager and poverty-stricken existence in the desert.

Life as a nomad shepherd brings the Bedouin into naked and constant contact with nature. He is out of doors almost all of the time, and his tent with its rents and holes hardly serves to separate him from the outside world to any significant degree even when he is inside. The sun over him by day and the moon and stars by night, the long stretches of sand and the rough rocky plains, the sand storms which are the terror of the desert, the fierce heat of the summer and the frosts of the winter, all of these are his constant companions. He learns to know the wilderness as few know it. The tracks of the various animals in the sand are to him an easily legible history of the happenings of several days back. Thus he lives not simply in contact with nature but rather immersed in it. The desert may be cruel, but he pines away if transplanted. His life may be hard, but he wants nothing else.

Yet strangely enough, in spite of his intense love for the desert and its freedom, all the beauties in nature around him fall on blind eyes as far as the Bedouin is concerned. Even the desert sunset and the moon-lit sand dunes apparently stir no responsive chord in his heart. It is as if all such things had been stripped off

21: Fisher S-4 (no date) 1950 M1 Middle East Bedooin MJ4 117

True Bedu coffee is strong, devoid of milk or sugar, but flavoured with herbs; and its consumption is the occasion of much social activity—the rounding off of the day, and an opportunity for discussion, and the reception of guests. For the Badawin, if not for city dwellers, coffee is truly the 'wine of Islam', and the equipment of all Badawin households includes at least one carpet, which is spread before the hearth, a mortar, and coffee pots and cups. A few cooking pots, and one or two large trays and bowls for communal eating make up the remainder of the culinary equipment.

Clothing of the Badawin is simple. A long robe of thick material is the principal, sometimes in fact the only, garment. In winter a waterproof cloak of woven camel hair is worn. A voluminous headcloth, held in place by a rope or band, is wound round the head so as to give protection to the face and neck, and rawhide, heelless sandals are worn on the feet.

Water is usually too precious for much washing[1]—indeed, the Koran permits the ceremonial use of sand in the daily ablutions which are enjoined on all Moslems—and animal urine is frequently used as a substitute. Badawin food is monotonous and scanty. Most important are milk products: curds, buttermilk, various kinds of cheese—of which *labné*, a kind of cream cheese, is the most widespread—and *samné*, or butter. In addition, wheat, barley, and occasionally a little rice are obtained by barter, blackmail, or brigandage from agriculturalists, or else grown very sporadically by the nomads themselves.[2] Small amounts of dried fruit, usually dates, are also eaten. Meat is provided only as a great luxury, since animals themselves are in effect a kind of fixed capital—owners must live from the yield, not upon the animal itself. Apart, then, from occasions of high festival, when special slaughtering takes place, only those animals that die naturally are eaten.

Meals are served first to the older men of the tent, each man using his dagger as a knife, and fingers as a fork,[3] after which, when they are satisfied, it is the turn of the younger men and boys. Later still come the women, and finally the girls—the sexes never intermingling during meals. On occasion when supplies are plentiful, the Badawin

[1] It has been said of a present-day certain Wahhabi tribe of Arabia that all adult members have at least once in their lifetime been forced to exist on water taken from the hump of a camel.

[2] Patches of ground are roughly sown with grain, and later in the year tribesmen return to harvest the crop.

[3] As far as possible, use of the left hand is avoided in polite Arab society—this hand is employed for menial and unpleasant tasks.

264 On occasion when supplies are plentiful the Badawin
146 eat copiously, because the time and scale of the next meal may be
147 uncertain. In general, the standard of nutrition of the Badawin is low—in the opinion of some, below the level necessary in other regions to sustain life. As a result, the Badawin are small, even stunted, and lightly built, though their physical powers and endurance are great. Life is, however, very hard; and by forty, particularly in the case of women, old age has begun. Fifty years is a long life for a nomad.

721 One means of supplementing the deficiencies in arid areas is by raiding. Amongst Badawin the *rhazw* (*razzia* or *rezzou*) is a recognised activity amounting almost to sport, but it also fulfils a definite economic function. The effects of a bad season are mitigated, as when rains have failed in the desert, the Bedu has a choice of taking what he requires by force from other people, or of starving. The word 'sport' has been used, because although fundamentally a serious matter, Badawin raids are conducted under certain conventions—almost, one might say, rules.[1] Rapid, unlooked-for coups, using cunning and guile, are most favoured: bloodshed is as far as possible avoided, though goods, womenfolk, and children become the property of the victors under a kind of slavery. Successful leadership in tribal raids [534] is the means by which personal reputation and power is built up: King Ibn Saud, originally a dispossessed desert nomad, has gained absolute power in Arabia through successful tribal encounters on an increasingly large scale. Badawin raids may be directed against other tribes, but 721 frequently, toll is levied on agricultural settlements on the fringe of the 651 desert. Less able to resist, and with more at stake than the nomad, settled cultivators sometimes remain under permanent tribute to Badawin tribes, and supply a quantity of needed foodstuffs to their overlords. The name *khaoua* (tribute of friendship) is applied to such transactions. Raiding is now declining, because of increasing control by local governments, but in addition to the political problem presented in controlling outbreaks, there is the economic factor of providing alternative occupation to ensure a livelihood.[2] Though declining, the practice is still not extinct. For as recently as 1946, J. C. Crowfoot could write, 'Arabs are now raiding each other in Fords and Chevrolets'.

[1] There are only three sources of amusement or distraction in Badawin life: conversation round a coffee hearth, family life, and raiding.

[2] Cf. the decline in population of the Barbary coastlands since the suppression of piracy in the Mediterranean. There, precisely the same economic factor was involved.

1: Raswan T-3 (1913-35) 1947 MD4 Rwala
Bedouins MJ4

meekly handed over the watch, which Ali put on his own wrist. "Let me take care of it for thee," he said to me, in his protective manner. He is actually "taking care" of my watch to this very day!

Our Fid'an hosts numbered seventeen horsemen and eight camel-riders, who had come on the scene after the attack on us. A gang of typical desert outlaws.

At the evening meal they spread a large leather camel-saddle cover for a tablecloth. Previously the dough for our bread had been kneaded on it. At other times it served as manger and watering-trough for the horses and camels, for it could be suspended by leather loops, one at each of the four corners.

The *Akid* poured sour camels' milk from a goat skin into a wooden basin and handed it round. The few *dhaluls* were lying close to us. The red campfire threw a glow of light over them and their long shadows melted into the blackness of the night. For a moment I imagined myself surrounded by strange monsters.

When I closed my eyes and heard only the belching and grunting of my table-companions, I could scarcely distinguish them from the camels chewing the cud. And Ali was the noisiest feeder of them all!

Next morning the Fid'ans proposed that they should join us with the idea of entering Ruala territory and lifting some camels. Nothing remained for Ali and myself but to make the best of these unwelcome proposals. We had to endure their company in the pious hope that somewhere we should fall in with the Ruala Bedouins.

Two days later we camped at the well of Al-Hajal,

1: Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

521 that have been brought back from the Asir front for the King to see? It is true, I say, O Abu Sa'ud. You know I have never told a lie yet, and why should I do so now?"

As he tells this whopper, the women giggle and cry out in pretended alarm. They, of course, believe the story, and half Arabia believes it too.

"Do you know", said Salim again, "that there is talk in the Summán that Faisal al Duwish is alive and in hiding?" I replied caustically that this could not be, seeing that he died in prison of an aneurism two years ago. "That is just it", replied Salim, "you go and swallow any fairy tale that Bin Sa'ud likes to put about. Actually, if you must know it, Al Duwish escaped and is in hiding. Why, as I was coming from Riyadh only twenty days ago I met a Mutairi woman who had met him. She saw him standing outside her tent in the evening. He had come from his hiding place in one of the *dáhals* to ask for a little bread. She is a person who knows the Shaikh like her own self. If you must know it was Wadha, Faisal's own sister. There, that is proof, isn't it?" Cries of pleasure come from the women, for all the world loved Faisal al Duwish, in the eyes of the Mutair the greatest Badawin leader and shaikh that was ever born of woman.

Such and many similar stories were recounted till, tiring, I told them all to go to bed as I had a long day before me in the morning.

264 "Will you want lunch for the road in the morning, Abu Sa'ud?"
574 said the practical-minded Amsha. "Yes, of course", said I. So she promised to get up at 4 a.m. and cook me three chickens* and a bowl of rice. The bowl, she said, had a cover, and with a loaf of Arab bread on top and the cover put on, the lunch would keep warm easily till noon. She was as good as her word. Next day's lunch was delicious. A salam now all round and I dismissed my woman friends, and the worthy Salim, and turned in.

231 I seemed to have slept but a little while by the entrance of my open tent, when I was awakened by ferocious barking. The three or four camp dogs had taken fright at something. I felt they were moving round and round the tents, they were quiet for five minutes or so and then broke out again in the fiercest growling and barking. I was very

* I had brought these along with me alive from Kuwait.

k Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

The Shepherd Boy

Chap. III

At 4 a.m. one of the men-servants gives the 'adhan (call to prayer), with which the day commences. It is still quite dark, but the prayer-call has roused the camp. The women also pray, but in their own tent. After prayers, the woman whose duty it is to make the daily supply of *leben* (sour milk), starts rocking her goatskin to and fro on the *mirjahak* (wooden tripod from the centre of which it hangs). According to the tribe they belong to, some women sing when at this work, others do not.

The woman of the house then orders a little bitter coffee or tea (a modern innovation) to be prepared and gives some to the shepherd and the camelherd, who with the dawn will start off on their day's duties.* With the coffee she hands them a supply of dates; part of this is eaten on the spot and part put into a little leather bag as the day's ration. If coffee or tea is scarce, the men are given a bowl of milk. While this is being done, another servant whose duty later will be to go and fetch water, etc., looses the lambs from inside the tent, where each has been attached by a woollen loop to a central rope during the night, and allows each lamb to be suckled by its mother. This done, the lambs are tied up again. The grown-up animals are counted to see that no wolf has stolen one during the night, and off they are sent to graze in charge of the shepherd boy. As the sheep are weak from lack of fodder and the long summer, they will be sent a couple of miles at most. There the shepherd-boy amuses himself one way or another till the sun gets up and makes him feel inclined to rest. He thereupon plants his staff* in the ground and hangs his *'abba* on top. This is enough to deceive the sheep into thinking the shepherd is standing near them and watching. They will not wander; the shepherd goes to sleep. There is no danger by day while he is in sight of the camp.

After the sheep go the camels. A few of these, being in extra poor condition as the result of the summer, find difficulty in rising. They are given a mouthful of dates to encourage them; one or two may have to be helped up, protesting with growls and burblings as their tails are seized and given an upward twist. They are all ready now and the herdsman bursts into song of encouragement and leads the

* Called *milkyal*. *Milkyal* is the special stick which shepherds keep to hang their *'abbas* on to prevent sheep and lambs from wandering. Every tent has one.

Najdi and Iraq sheep take no notice of the *milkyal*, only the black sheep of Ham and Kuwait. [See Bible. "Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me"—here "staff" is undoubtedly the Arabian *milkyal*.]

k Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

512 238 462 [638] way, riding monkey-like on the hindquarters of one of the better-conditioned animals, and looking as if every minute he would slide off over the animal's tail. The herdsman's song is wild and weird, rising and falling in semitones. As often as not he starts off with a description of the beautiful grazing that his charges are going to find ahead of them. He pleads with his camels and says they are to trust him, their guide and helper. He it is who is leading them to pastures fair, and grass that is green and succulent. The camels seem to understand, for with sundry groans and moans, they slowly follow him in single file. As they disappear into the early morning mist, the last you see or hear of the party is the distant singing of the camelherd. Then all are swallowed up in the morning fog. Like the sheep, the camels will not go far. Five to eight miles is their limit just now. Grazing has been so pitifully scarce in their long summer camp they must be allowed to get fit slowly; presently they will go further afield. The camelherd does not sleep by day. His is a much more valuable herd. He watches, with rifle ready, even though there is not the slightest rumour of danger or trouble in the air. To while away the long day, he may look for truffles on the hilltops or occasionally try and catch a jerboa. In the main, however, he watches and watches till the time comes to go home.

512 264 The camels and sheep having gone out to graze and the sun being up, the tent family will have a meagre breakfast consisting of a little tea without milk, and some dates. If the housewife is in funds she may issue a small ration of bread to all; more often than not they go without.

512 462 313 [951] The daughter of the house with her small sister, or her girl friend from the neighbour's tent, now starts off to collect brushwood for the day's needs. *'Arfaj* is what they seek, and as this has a tough root, they arm themselves with a small axe and several yards of goat's hair rope to carry home the firewood on their heads. Other children of from five to ten years old often accompany the girls to see if they can find an early flower or a truffle. It is their one way of enjoying themselves, they have few other amusements. The girls move off with strong healthy stride, their long sleeves bound behind their necks to free their arms, and their skirts hitched up at the waist to give freedom of movement. How straight and supple they are! Daily this fetching

k Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

Fetching Water

in of firewood goes on, and the girls also common get in a two- or three-mile walk every morning. It is good for them and makes them strong, straight and fit to bear children later on, and they know it.

Two hours later they return, each bearing an enormous load of *'arfaj* bushes on their heads, and followed by the tired little mites who have gone with them. In the meantime the woman of the tent has not been idle. She, with her sister, or old mother if she has one to help her, has been sunning the family bedding (*lahaf*) and putting it away, or has been cleaning pots and pans from the previous night's meal and has tidied up the tent. She has sent off the spare shepherd to go and fetch water from the wells they have just vacated, perhaps 10 miles back. He takes for the purpose a couple of male camels kept back from the herd, on whom he loads up either two large camel water-skins, or four goatskins. This will suffice for the needs of the tent and its neighbours. Should a small *shamlis* exist near them, as is often the case after rains, the daughters of the house will once again be sent off with goatskins (*gurad*) to collect the water—(a *shamlis* is a small supply of water lying under the surface of a dry, sandy water-course which does not sink deep and disappear completely, because it lies on subsurface rock or clay). The girls scratch away the sand to a depth of two or three feet to reach the brown, muddy liquid. They ladle it into skins by means of a small cup (*jiddi*) of tamarisk wood, and keep it on one side for drinking purposes only. The water is at first opaque and yellowish, but the silt soon settles.

To keep the water-skins cool during the day, a bed of *'arfaj* bush is made just outside the women's quarters, and all skins are laid on the bed.

By now it is time to prepare the midday meal. If the family is a fairly prosperous one, rice will be cooked and made tasty with *samn*, clarified butter of sheep's milk, and all will sit down and eat their fill. If the family is a poor one, there will be no meal till sundown.

After the midday meal, the woman of the house will first clean the cooking pots, and then start weaving any cloth that may be required for the tent, or if the tent is complete she will work on a *ghaz* or *mamad*, which in due course she will sell when she visits a town to do *mushkilak*. A *ghaz* if well and artistically made will bring her in Rs.45 to Rs.50—a vast sum of money for a Bedawin family.

h Dickens G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI I Kuwait

on it—Oh my children, oh my servants, we will move to it to-morrow morning."

Yet what, after all, is this new-found grazing? Nothing but a slightly rained-upon locality, where a few green shoots and weeds wait for man and beast to find them. Yet with the scarcity that prevails, the find is welcome. At sunset the camels once again come home, this time with the herdsman riding behind them. He is no longer singing, but encourages them with a "wa-ho, wa-ho, hurry up my daughters, the night is coming on, 'tis late—'tis late".

On arrival the camels are gently shepherded to the front of the tent where they are encouraged to lie down in a semicircle forming a sort of zareeba, with heads all facing the open side of the tent. This for protection, and to give each other warmth, for the tent keeps off the chill night breeze. However cold it is, the camels have no covering on their backs, and they appreciate any shelter they can get from the night wind.

An hour after sunset, and often when it is quite dark, the sheep come in with much "baa-ing" and calling upon their lambs to come out and appease their hunger, for the lambs have been kept at home all day. The sheep are brought into the semicircle formed by the camels, and the lambs are let loose. For twenty minutes or so pandemonium reigns. The babies have to be guided to their mothers, who will accept no lamb but their own, and in the darkness there is much apparent confusion due only to the noise made by ewes and lambs.

The shepherds know their job, and the lambs, having fed, are soon taken back and tied up inside the tent. All this time there are no lights, for the Badawin family cannot afford such luxury. Only in the kitchen portion of the tent a fire is cooking the evening meal and the master of the house sitting in front of the guest portion of his tent has got a small fire going with the embers of dry camel dung. Every now and then he flings on a bunch of *'arfaj* to cause a blaze and show him what is going on.

Supper follows, a simple meal of boiled rice and possibly a little bread. It is washed down with *laben*, of which master takes long and copious draughts. The women do not eat with him. They have already had their snack. Only the wife sits by her husband to see that he has

h Dickens G-6 (1923-47) 1961 MI 1 Kuwait
Bodoolas MJ4

all he wants. *Coffee* then goes round, and master, servants and women go early to bed.

That night Allah the All-seeing, the All-merciful, is good to his people. As the camp sleeps, a great thundercloud appears and gradually creeps up from the far north-west. Nearer and nearer it comes till at 3 a.m. it is exactly overhead. There is a death-like stillness, and even the camp dogs cease their baying and the sleepers turn uneasily in their sleep. The air is oppressive, even hot. Suddenly a cold chill wind begins to blow; the shepherd watching his sheep in front of the tent wakes his master and whispers, "Allah Kerim, Insha'Llah it will rain, the mercy of God is coming, Oh Allah, give us of thy blessing". Suddenly there is a soul-rising thunderclap followed by a simultaneous blaze of forked lightning, which lights up the whole landscape a vivid bluey-white. Clap after clap follows; each rolling away in the distance like salvos of great artillery. Shouts and cries rise from the camp. The men rush to the camels and sheep, the women to the tent ropes, and then with a dull roar growing every instant deeper and closer, the rain comes at last. At first great heavy drops the size of small saucers, then in a few seconds the downpour. And what a downpour! Fortunately there is no wind but just a deep booming roar, as the water pours down in sheets. For ten minutes everyone holds on to what he can grip, expecting the squall which usually follows such rain. But none comes. Then cries of joy as the open spaces round the camp site begin to fill with water. The tents perched up on higher ground than the surrounding country are safe from flood, but by 3.30 a.m. the countryside is a vast shallow lake. By 3.45 a.m. the rain thins off. Regardless of everything, men, women and children rush forth to collect the delicious rain-water into every kind of utensil they can lay hands on: water-skins, basins, tins and cooking pots of every description are made to serve. When these are filled women and children sit in the water and literally wallow in it for sheer joy. The men rouse the camels and make them drink knee deep in the fresh brown sea. Everyone is delirious, for they have been drinking brackish and even salt water for the last nine months. The great blessing has come at last. God is great, God is good to the *Muslimeh*. The incongruous part of it all is that it is still pitch dark. No one has a lantern, no one cares. At length dawn breaks. Prayers,

k Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

CHAPTER XII

Food and Hospitality

262 The well-to-do Badawin, such as our man Salim al Muzaiyin or the shaikh of a tribe, has one square meal a day, usually in the evening. This consists of plain rice cooked in *semen* (ghi), a few dates dipped in butter, some *leben* (butter-milk), finishing up with coffee. In the early morning he starts the day with some *leben* and dates, also coffee. He does not often eat meat himself, because he cannot afford to do [574] so. Should a guest of standing arrive, the host will always kill a sheep or lamb for him, which goes the round of the family after the guest has had his share.

The poor Badawin, and the great majority of Badawin are poor, get one meal a day consisting of dates and camel's milk, with a very occasional dish of plain rice or a piece of bread.

The very poor Badawin, such as the herdsman (*shdwi*) who tends the sheep or camels of the more fortunate, gets nothing but camel's milk. Very rarely he gets some dates also, and still more rarely a bit of rice and meat when his shaikh or employer has a guest, his share being the entrails of the sheep that has been killed.

Speaking generally, in the province of Hasa rice is eaten where possible in preference to bread. The opposite is the case in inner Najd, Qasim, etc. The reason is obvious: wheat is grown in Najd and [264] rice has to be transported there. The Badawin, like all other Muslims, eats with his right hand only and gives it a cursory wash before starting his meal. He is always hungry, and as a result if he can get such things as locusts, edible monitors (*dhub*), game of any sort and even foxes, 788 he will eat them with relish. Speaking generally, the Badawin proper will eat anything that comes his way, especially if no one is looking, though he must always ceremonially cut the throat of any animal or bird he snares or shoots, saying as he does this: "In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful" (*B'ismi'llah al Rahman al Rahim*).

[pages 187 and 188 contain no textual material]

k Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1961 MI 1 Kuwait MI 1
Bedouins MJ4

B 264 After the meal is over, though he ought to wash his hands, he rarely does so, owing to shortage of water. He prefers to wipe his hands on the tent and later in his beard. The 'Ajman tribe pride themselves in being able to show grease hand-marks on their tents; these indicate "hospitality". Bread is rarely eaten except among the well-to-do Badawin, though of course if bread is available any man will eat it with pleasure. B 262

Mushrooms (*fuṭr*) and truffles (*faqaʿ*) are eagerly sought for and eaten in the rainy season, but these are a luxury.

On special occasions the Badawin gets camel's meat, if for instance his shaikh is entertaining. The "hump" especially is considered a great delicacy in the cold weather. I have not infrequently eaten camel's meat myself and found it rather coarse and leathery, but the Badawin loves it.

K 262 In Kuwait town and among the town-dwellers of Najd, camel's meat and beef are regularly eaten during the winter months. Both are said to keep a person warm, and the former to make him strong.

B 262 574 Every Badawin, whether rich or poor, must entertain and feed a stranger who asks for a night's lodging.

If such guest be a big man and his host is fairly well to do, a sheep is invariably killed and served up with rice, sprinkled with sultanas, almonds and a few onion shavings.

If the guest is a poor nomad Badawin, the guest will be given a dinner of plainly cooked rice and some dates and *laben*. Should the host himself be very poor, he will still take the traveller in, and do the very best he can for him, even if he has only a few dates to offer; but entertain him he must, that is, give him food and a night's shelter.

B 574 Should a shaikh or well-to-do person visit a poor man's tent and ask for hospitality, he is expected to reward his host, either on leaving or on reaching home, with either a money present or a *kiswah* (present of clothing). This is the invariable custom.

Should a traveller pass a tent with only women in it, the head of the tent being away, say tending sheep or camels, the principal woman of the tent will come out, and stand in front of her tent with a bowl of *laben*, a signal to the passer-by to come and refresh himself. If an important cavalcade passes by, and the lady of the tent desires to attract their attention and get them to come and partake of her bounty,

k Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

she will set: a light pole, usually one of the tent side-supports, and 574
hang one of her holiday orange, red or black garments on it, and stick it into the ground in front of her tent as a signal. This is her silent way of inviting the stranger to come and partake. I have been thus invited on several occasions, especially by members of the 'Ajman tribe and the Muntafiq.

If a man and his wife are both at home and a guest arrives, of whatever status, he is welcomed by the man and placed in the *diwāniyah* portion of the tent, that is, the end furthest away from the women's quarters. There he is given his coffee, food and a place to sleep. The women do not come near him or attempt to talk to him, unless he happens to remain two or three days, on account perhaps of heavy rains. The women then thaw somewhat, and when they do address him it is as "my brother".

When Badawins are encamped singly, they always endeavour to 361
hide their tents in hollows and in such positions as to escape notice. 574
This is partly due to a natural desire to escape attention in case an enemy is about, but more often to escape being seen by a traveller. The latter must be attended to if he begs for food and a night's shelter, and this entertaining of strange guests often bears very heavily on the tent-dweller. These remarks apply to the Badawin of the desert proper and do not include tribes such as the settled ones of Iraq, who are very wealthy and normally entertain on a most lavish scale.

Some tribes, especially the Muntafiq of the Euphrates, are so 574
scrupulous in exercising hospitality that they often almost ruin themselves rather than be thought stingy to guests. A man having only a single sheep in the world will go and kill it to feed a strange guest. The Brāih (Wasil) section of the desert Mutair have a similar reputation for entertaining, and are looked up to in consequence. The Birzan subsection of this tribe, having been blessed by the Prophet himself for their kindness and hospitality, were rewarded by being told that their blood even was blessed—hence it is believed that to drink a Birzani's blood will cure a man of impotence, cause a woman to conceive and counter the poison of a mad dog.

Some tribes, notably the Dhafir, have an unpleasant custom which 264
often annoys those sitting down to a meal. Say there are ten men dining together, if one gets up satisfied, the rest must at once all get

h Dickson G-5 (2929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
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up also and wash their hands in token of having finished. The result is that to avoid having to leave the table hungry, guests learn to bolt their food in most harmful style.

The favourite drinks among sheep-owning Badawin are *laben* (butter-milk) and *roba* (thick curdled milk). The shepherd tribes (Shawâwi) prepare their *laben* from sheep's milk, the camel tribes (Bédûs) from camels' milk. The latter has to be boiled first, before it is shaken up in skins. Normally a camel-owning tribe will give a guest plain camels' milk to drink. *Laben* is not often offered.

Camels' milk has no cream on it, and no butter can be got from it. It is a purgative, and should be taken in moderation by European travellers or persons not used to it.

MEALS

A Badawin lunch or dinner

Among the Badawin proper the banquet of a shaikh is served on a large, round, tinned copper tray (*sanîya*) on which is piled up, a foot high, boiled rice covered with yellow gravy made from the fat of the sheep, and on top of all is placed a boiled young sheep or lamb (always a male). If the shaikh happens to favour Najd manners and customs, the tray will stand on a pedestal (all in one piece) called *sanîya abu kursi*; this is shaped thus:

and translated means "The tray, father of the chair". The whole is now placed on a *sifra* or circular mat, corresponding to our tablecloth.

The Badawin call the cooked rice *'eysh* and the whole sheep *dhaikha* or *mâli* (lamb). Both are cooked rather crudely and for our taste there is usually far too much *semn* or *dehen* (clarified butter) mixed with the cooking. The meat is usually rather tough, unless a young lamb happens to have been killed. Nevertheless, if you are hungry this form of banquet tastes remarkably good. The most tasty bits of meat and the tenderest are the strips along both sides of the

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backbone, the muscles of the shoulders and the muscles of the leg near the knuckle: the tongue, the kidneys, the cheek bits and the eyes, are also well-known delicacies. The fat of the tail is always looked upon as the guest's particular right. The Arabian sheep is of the fat-tailed variety unknown in England. Round the central dish of rice and meat, the shaikh places two or three bowls of *laben*, with lumps of rather dirty butter floating in it—also a plate or two of dates. The guest, after finishing his meal, drinks *laben*, and then turns to the dates, which he eats with the butter floating in the *laben*. These dates and butter, especially if the dates are fresh (*rutab*), are delicious.

Prior to the meal, and after the meal, coffee is handed round. Among the Badawin coffee is rather a poor and watery stuff, and following the Najd fashion is made with lots of *hail* (cardamoms) in it. After lunch, it is polite to thank your host with a *Allah i kathir khair ak* or a *'An'am Allah 'alaik* (God increase your good works! or God reward you!).

It is also quite correct to make pleasant remarks about the good cooking of the housewife, and if you catch a glimpse of her, as you often may behind the *gata* or curtain dividing the women's from the men's quarters, you may say *Allah i kathir khair ish ya mu'aqilo* (God give you plenty, hostess of mine!). The lady will always reply with a *hanni wa 'a'afiah* or *'alaikum al 'a'afiah* (may you be satisfied!).

Having enjoyed the shaikh's hospitality, you leave after taking coffee, and the relatives, young men, big children, etc., eat up what is left of the meal: it is always amusing to see these hang back in pretended shyness, as if to say, "You know I never came here to get a meal", when the host invites them to come forward and partake with a *Yalla ya ilum, gum*, or *Yalla ya rubi'a gum*, or *Thafadhalu ya awlad*. He usually has to do this several times and in a rather injured voice.

The host of course does not eat with his guests, but later with the members of the family. It is always seemly for the guest, if he be a prominent person like a shaikh or Political Agent, to bring a present of rice, coffee or sugar with him for the tent. This gift he presents in casual manner before he leaves: if he wants to win more praise, he will also have brought with him materials for half a dozen frocks for the

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B 514 431 women of the tent. This makes him their friend for life. I always made a point of trying to do this in Kuwait.

A dinner party given by a townsman (hadhari) or better-class semi-nomad tribesman ('arabdar)

B 252 264 K 252 264 This is a very much grander affair than the preceding, and the rice is usually of the *amber bu* kind from Iraq or North Iran. After boiling, the whole sheep is browned all over by plunging it in boiling *dehen* or *semen* (clarified butter). It may be even baked in a baker's oven, when it is known as *lahm mashwi*.

Over the rice is spread a thin layer of hot sultanas, shredded onions (fried), gram and other spices. Dried pomegranate seeds are often introduced (an unpleasant habit, as grit like sand-grains seems to have got into the food). The whole dish is surrounded with plates, or small bowls, containing various meat dishes, vegetables, sweetmeats and fruit (usually cut-up melon). The number of these dishes increases with the importance and wealth of the host. The following are the names of the more important dishes thus served:

(*a*) *Marag*—a tasty brown stew containing small lumps of meat, tomatoes (*tamâtis*), egg-plant (*baitan-jan*), and ladies' fingers (*bâmia*).

(*b*) *Shaikh Mahshi*—Young white pumpkins, or preferably large cucumbers, stuffed with rice, nuts, and minced meat.

(*c*) *Baragh* or *Dôlma*—A mash of rice and meat wrapped up in young vine leaves, and thoroughly boiled. It is delicious to the taste. (Originally from Turkey.)

(*d*) *Tamâtis marag*— is like (*a*) above, but made of tomato and onion sauce.

(*e*) *Dôlmas*—Stuffed onions like (*c*) above.

(*f*) *Kubâb*—Meat, rice and sultana rissoles.

(*g*) *Mahallibi*—Ground rice or arrowroot cooked in milk and flavoured with cardamum, and sometimes with chopped pistachio nuts.

(*h*) *Mahallibi wa Zâfaran*—Like (*g*) mixed with saffron to colour it yellow.

(*i*) *Harîs*—A kind of crushed corn-and-meat porridge, very nourishing.

B 264 K 264 Interspersed with the above are plates of dates (*samar*), bowls of sour milk (*leben*), grapes, sections of melon (if in season), also large flat thin wafers of unleavened bread or thick round flat oven-made

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bread, common to the whole East. Very modern hosts now add various coloured jellies.

COMMON EXPRESSIONS USED AT MEALS

B 264
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Tafadhal or *Summu*—Used by a host to his guests when inviting them to start eating. The first word is also used when a person welcomes a guest to his tent or into his house in town.

B'ismi'llah—"In the name of God", spoken just before starting to eat.

Hanniyan—Said to a person who has just taken and enjoyed a long drink. The correct reply is *Allah i hanik* or *Hanrakum Allah*.

Awafi—Host says to guest who has obviously enjoyed his dinner.

Allah i kathir khair ak or *ana'am Allah 'alaik*—The equivalent of "thank you". A guest formally offers thanks after a meal to his host.

Hanni wa 'a'afia or *mal Allah wa malak*—The host's formal reply to his guest's thanks.

THE RITUAL OF COFFEE MAKING

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All over Arabia the elaborate ceremony of coffee making is the sign the guest is welcome and honoured above all men by his host.

From the highest to the lowest this making and offering of coffee is the first duty of a householder, whether he be a town- or tent-dweller, when entertaining a stranger or an acquaintance.

A 272

In Egypt and the north of Arabia, and especially in the towns of Syria and around Mosul, Western civilisation and Turkish influence have long ago had their effect and coffee is normally offered in small Western-made cups, full to the brim and standing in neat little saucers which are brought round on a tray, the guest helping himself. Such coffee, following the Turkish fashion, is sweetened, is purposely mixed with grounds and has a regular scum on the top. It is quite properly known as "Turkish coffee", and we see it often in London and Paris restaurants. The making of this coffee needs but a short description.

An ordinary, small-sized, brass coffee-pot is filled with cold water, about half a pint, and to it are added two tablespoonfuls of ground coffee and one and a half tablespoonfuls of castor sugar. It is then put on the fire. When the mixture comes to the boil the contents of the coffee-pot froth up and would overflow, but the coffee-maker takes the coffee-pot off the fire and, holding it by the handle, taps it three or four times sharply on the side hearth, so causing the froth to

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151 721 followed these tracks for about two hundred yards. He then came back to us and said that fifteen Awamir from the north had raided the Jumiba near the southern coast, lifted three of their camels, watered at a certain well, and passed this way twelve days before. I myself could not have been certain that the tracks were even the tracks of camels, they were so blown by the wind, but he had read the whole story. We had been out of touch with all Arabs for over a month, but when we met Badu they confirmed that this raid had taken place exactly as he had said. It is, however, a mistake to think that all Badu can track. Some of them are as bad at tracking as they are at guiding, but when you meet a good tracker or a good guide his skill is uncanny.

181 577 609 574 You might think that a life like this, where to keep alive at all is only just possible, was bound to degenerate into a brutish struggle for survival. But this is not so. These Badu are, it is true, hard and ruthless, avaricious and impatient of restraint, yet no people are so generous. They will give away their clothes literally from off their backs, and they are brave, loyal to each other, courteous, patient, and unselfish. I have spent the greater part of the last five years with them, and I have found it hard indeed to live up to their standards of decency. Arab hospitality is famous, but I wonder if you realize what it implies. The Badu do not ask someone to dinner when they have got something extra or when they feel inclined. One or two or half a dozen people are travelling past, see an encampment, and decide to spend the night there, for the traveller in the desert takes a free meal of anyone he sees. The host and his family are probably almost starving, yet everything they have is routed out and set before their self-invited guests, whom they may never have seen before, and if possible they will slaughter an animal for their dinner. I have often received this hospitality, and even now it makes me uncomfortable, though my host has sent me away in the morning feeling that it really was I who had conferred a kindness on him. Of course, another time it is one's host who is travelling and taking meals off someone else, so it evens up, I suppose. But it is not that; it is the wonderful, open-hearted, ungrudging way in which they do it. I am afraid I have always resented the sight of unwanted guests when we were short of food.

576 264 When travelling they always divide up their food before each meal and then draw lots for it, otherwise there is invariably an argument, never because someone says he has been given too little, but because he maintains that he has received too much. Among semi-settled Arabs, where the strict Badu conventions are not necessarily observed, you soon see how [271] quickly it is resented when someone always takes the largest piece. Once 576 we reached a well after we had been twenty-four hours without water, yet no one would drink when we arrived because some of our party had lingered behind to graze their camels, and they would only drink when [486] everyone was there. The bond which exists between travelling companions is indeed tremendously strong; it is only this which makes travelling possible at all. If you are accompanied by a tribesman from a hostile tribe, you are safe from that tribe while he is with you, and he 577 would fight in your defence even against his own brothers. To betray a companion is the blackest crime which a Badu can commit; but it goes